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CANDID EXAMINATION

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*Sept 19*

*1764*

Mr GIB's PAMPHLET,

INTITLED,

*An Exposition of a false and abusive libel, &c.*

By ALEXANDER PIRIE.

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*It is terrible to have dealings with deep malice, joined to a shallow understanding. Such ever miss a wise man's meaning for want of sense; and from an abundance of ill-will, clap upon it a dull and mischievous one of their own.*

WARNEFORD.

EDINBURGH:

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BY ALEX. H. H. H.

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## P R E F A C E.

**I**T is generally allowed, that no controversy can be more vain and fruitless, than that which turns upon the meaning of a book. No matter, whether this or the contrary be its real sense, while we agree about the soundness of the one, and the heterodoxy of the other. No dispute can be of any real use, but that which tends to clear some article of natural or revealed truth.

It may be alledged, perhaps, that I myself have engaged in such a fruitless controversy, and so have been guilty of doing what I have just now disapproved. But I have not done it willingly, but through constraint. Had I introduced that controversy into the synod, or refused to keep communion with them, because they viewed a book in a light different from mine,—then I would have forfeited all claim even to the name of a *Christian*. But since they excommunicated me merely because I could not see a book with their eyes, it is easy to see, that although I am the occasion, yet I am not the author of that controversy; and also, that since I must have some reasons why I could not be convinced by Mr Gib's dissertation,—it is reasonable I should shew what these reasons are, that so all concerned may see that I was not obstinate in adhering to my former opinion of that Essay.

These reasons the reader will find in the following pages. It is, however, to be observed, that I do not pretend to vindicate every expression in that Essay, nor have I undertaken to vindicate the Essay itself. This would be great presumption, while the author is alive. I have only shewn what my view of the Essay is, and the reasons which determine my opinion: but whether Mr Gib or I have got the author's meaning, I shall leave others to determine. If I have missed it, all that can be said is, that I am not so capable to judge about the meaning of it as Mr Gib is. But however it be, it is a matter of small consequence to me, as I have declared my own sentiments about *Liberty and Necessity*, which, I suppose, all Calvinists will agree to.

However, as the Essay is not calculated for common understandings, I would desire the vulgar not to read it. Suffer

fer it to remain among the hands of those for whose sake it was wrote, *viz.* men of learning and penetration, or at least those who have a considerable knowledge of moral philosophy. Men who know not human nature, can never be capable judges of an essay on human nature. Let others read our Calvinistic divines: particularly they may read Mr Edwards on the subject, where they will find it set in the clearest light.

I am surprised to hear several people alledge, that I have wrote my former pamphlet with bitterness and ill nature, and so have indulged the spirit which I so much condemn. I have not wrote any thing for which my heart condemns me upon the most cool deliberation. That I have indulged a little of satire, I allow: but a good reason why; — my subject demanded it. A subject of satire cannot be successfully managed, but by using at least some of her *poignancy*. Religion herself has a feeling, and cannot fail to treat with severity, or to speak warmly against, a conduct dictated by the spirit which reigns in the gloomy cells of the *inquisition*; a conduct so fatal to her interest, so contrary to her precepts, and so inconsistent with the spirit which she inspires. I am conscious of wishing evil to none of the human race; yet I reckon it quite consistent with the spirit of love, to use every lawful mean to expose the vices and follies of mankind. And, I think, the best way to reclaim men from any vice, is, to draw its picture as lively, and to set it in as clear a point of view as we possibly can.

My reflections, however keen, are founded upon truth. Experience undeniably proves the facts. I have said nothing but what I know to be certain. I shall, then, make no farther apology for my conduct. I shall only wish, that the synod may be so directed in their future proceedings, that they may give the world no farther proof of the truth of what allegations I have laid against them, but that they may ever pursue such wise and candid measures as Christianity dictates, that so the world may learn from the whole series of their actions, that they have been with Jesus.

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## CANDID EXAMINATION

O F

### Mr GIB'S PAMPHLET.

**M**Y readers may remember, that when I wrote my Vindication, I challenged Mr Gib to publish his exposition of the essay on *Liberty and Necessity*, which he delivered before the synod, that so I might have an occasion to give the world an account of the reasons why I was not convinced of error in that essay by it, or why I could not see with Mr Gib's eyes.

At last, after he had hesitated long, this great champion, inured to heretical war, stalks into the field,—clad in a coat of clouds, with an helmet of confidence, and for a spear he had rancour without arguments. He comes—despising his young adversary, with a mouth speaking great things.—He first considered me as a dog, barking at him and the synod \*. However, I know not how it has happened, but I have surely either stunned him with my noise, or bitten him; for when he retired, he assured me, that although I had brought him upon the field for once, I may bark as long as I please, but I shall never get him without doors again.

He seems to give three reasons for his retreat: 1<sup>st</sup>, His cause is so good, that he is confident no



answer I can make “ will deserve a reply \*.” But it is time enough to ascertain the merit of a book when we have read it. *2dly*, He finds himself the less in hazard the longer he lives — “ of being dis-  
“ composed with that kind of treatment” which I give him †. I own it is good to grow wise as we grow old. *3dly*, The rock upon which his synod “ is built, is in no danger of being hurt by the  
“ foaming rage of such billows” as I have driven at it ‡. As I have dashed billows against nothing but ignorance and tyranny,—these would seem to be the rocks mentioned;—if so, may Providence suddenly rend them in pieces!

In his preface, too, he tells me, that I have no right to preach, because he and his brethren saw it meet to take my licence from me. But little does Mr Gib consider, that his argument may be retorted against him and all his brethren, as it equally affects them and me. They all preach on the foot of a protest, and so do I. Nor is it a new thing to find a minister in no communion with other ministers: and although he thinks it a great fault that I have no particular denomination, I glory in having the very noblest one, — *Christian*:

*Christian is the highest style of man.* YOUNG.

In his elaborate argument he tells me, that the office which the synod's licence invested me with, is not a standing office in the church. But the synod's licence invested me with a power to preach the gospel, which the synod could not take from me, as they had no sufficient reason, or rather no reason at all, for so doing.

BEFORE I proceed to detect the falsity of Mr Gib's reasoning about the essay in dispute, I shall consider his remarks on my own performance.

\* p. 3.

† p. 4.

‡ p. 3.



He first accuses me of drawing a monstrous picture of the synod, which he gives us at large. It is, I own, a picture of a monster; but, I believe, all sensible people, who have any tolerable acquaintance with the synod, will allow that it is very just, save only in that it wants a few finishing strokes, to touch it into perfection. It cannot exactly correspond with the original, unless I had borrowed some of the colourings of the man of sin, and made its lineaments breathe an air of persecution; — unless I had wrinkled its brow into a sullen contempt for all mankind, and filled its mouth with *Anathemas* against all who shall presume to differ from it in sentiment; — unless, in short, I had lifted up its hand to bless those who blindly submit to its decisions, and ignorantly follow its dictates, and had wrote *Jedidiah*, or perhaps *Infallibility*, for its motto. Any then who imagine that I have drawn the picture larger than the life, or added any colouring too high, — I must pronounce ignorant of the original. We must judge of the synod from their actions, and not from Mr Gib's words: and if their procedure in the affair of the burges's-oath, in Mr Thomas Mair's case, and my own, — be not sufficient documents of all that I have said of them, I refer it to all impartial judges. All those sentiments which Mr Gib is pleased to call *calumnious abuse*, are, in my view, inferences fairly deducible from their conduct; and to tell the truth, is surely no *calumny*.

In order to disprove what I have said about their attachment to the work of excommunication, the expositor alledges, — “ that just two things, in the course of near thirty years, have been made by them a ground of such excommunication as is here meant \*,” viz. the burges's-oath, and the antigovernment scheme. This is a falsehood; as many other things have been made a ground of excommunication by them, and many others have been

\* P. 7.

excommunicated during that time. However, it seems M. Gib has seen the tyranny of the synod's procedure in the two instances mentioned: for he owns, that these two things have been made a ground of such excommunication as I speak of in the passage referred to, *viz.* an excommunication without any sufficient ground.

That he may disprove what I have said about their ignorance of learning and style, he has told the world, that the same learning is to be had at *Abernethy*, which is taught at *Edinburgh* and *St Andrews*: A particular honour to these two seats of learning, to be laid on a level with that at *Abernethy*! But I suppose none will believe that nothing is to be got at these universities but logics and metaphysics. At *Abernethy*, indeed, they are allowed to step within the threshold of some few other sciences for the sake of form; but they are immediately called back with a *Touch not, taste not, handle not*. Especially *moral philosophy*, or the *knowledge of human nature*, is represented in an odious light. And no wonder, since the knowledge of ourselves is the best cure for bigotry.

He tells us again, that they are "as great strangers to the writings of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, as they are to Mahomet's Alcoran\*," But they may all have read Mahomet's Alcoran, since it is to be sold in Scotland: this, then, is no proof that they are strangers to these two gentlemen. Besides, although they may be unacquainted with them, yet they have read other writings formed upon their plan.

It is easy to see what notion Mr Gib himself has of modern improvements in learning, while he calls them all, with a contemptuous sneer, "the new-fashioned cut of genius, new flourishes of polite literature," &c. &c. It is evident too, that in that act of synod which he so much boasts of, all "polite-  
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"ness of expression" is condemned; and consequently a neat, plain, nervous (the only polite) style, is to be abjured.

He tells me, that the synod are not masters of new flights about a thousand infinites, and eternal time. And I really believe it, because they are not masters of natural philosophy, geometry, mathematics, and the doctrine of fluxions; else they would find a million of infinites instead of a thousand: there they might find infinite numbers, magnitudes, areas, &c. As to the phrase *eternal time*, I suppose no man ever used it, although Mr William Moncrieff thought it proper to say to Mr Gib that I used it; and Mr Gib, with his usual meanness, has made an intimation of it to the world—However, although the professor should use it, it will give me no offence, as I would explain it—*eternal duration*. Candour directs us to put the best construction upon a man's words they can possibly bear. But it is to be observed, that more than the one half of those sentences which Mr Gib has applied to the synod—are laid in such general terms in my book, that they are equally applicable to all to whom this character belongs, of whatever denomination they be. But it seems he thinks the cap fits them; therefore let them put it on.

But I am accused, *2dly*, of bespattering Mr Gib with the reproach which I deal so freely about me. Strange! Mr Pirie, how durst you reproach Mr Gib? To tell the truth now, it seems, is to reproach one. I have only said what I have the best reasons for. He accused the essay of error on Tuesday, and he owns he did not read it till Wednesday: and I shall soon shew, that he has drawn such consequences from it, as could never be drawn by any man of candour or true Christianity. As to what he denies that he said in the synod, he has forgot it, for he did say so; even although he should think that this is the same with telling him, "that he has  
" fallen



“fallen from all place in the rational creation.” I shall only wish that he may act more rationally next. I cannot see, then, wherein I have reproached him. —But how could you call him *the synod*? Because I study to give honour to whom honour is due. He acted truly as the synod in my case, as, according to his own account, *p.* 101. only another member had read the essay, and consequently the rest behoved to believe Mr Gib’s representation, and condemn it because he did it; for that other member said very little. —After all, if I have reviled him, I refer it to the world if I have not got a sufficient retaliation \*.

3dly, The expositor alledges, that I have extended my outrage to the whole body of a gospel-ministry; and expresses great indignation, because I give them the name—*clergy*. This, says he, is “commonly used as a term of reproach.” Mr Gib ordinarily says, that a thing is as he would have it to

\* I shall here give the world a very short specimen of Mr Gib’s calumnious abuse of me, that so he may know “what manner of spirit he is of, and as a strong presumption to others, that it must be an erroneous course he is gone into,—and that he cannot be supposed, with such a spirit, to have given any fair representation of facts.” He tells the world, that I use “random and exorbitant strokes of rage, such as bid a wild defiance to truth, sobriety, decency, and good manners,—with something of a blasphemous cast in my way of bringing our Saviour upon the field;” *i. e.* I am a man of rage, a liar, a madman, a blasphemer, &c. Again, according to him, I am guilty of downright falsehood, railing accusation, particular scurrility, calumnious abuse, calumnious reviling, and only not openly associated with infidels and debauchees; *i. e.* I am a downright liar, a railer, an accuser, a scurrilous person, a calumniator, a reviler, an abuser of others, a Deist or an Atheist, a debauchee. I get all these odious titles within four pages of his Exposition. It is then very odd, that any should think he has wrote candidly, when rail-wives could not have afforded him more abusive language: whereas, in all those passages in my book which Mr Gib calls calumnious abuse, I defy even malice itself to find any such epithets, or any characters whatever, save these two, *ignorant*, and *fond of excommunication*, which are neither scurrilous nor abusive. I wish, then, that the expositor would first take the bean out of his own eye.



be. I have seen this term employed by many Christian writers of all denominations, and I never yet saw it used as a term of reproach. And let any look his dictionary, and he will find that it is never taken in such a sense. That he may get me to do what I do not incline, he asserts that I alledge, that the clergy refuse to own that they are liable to err in all they do. This is an invidious falsehood: I never said or wrote any such thing.

As to the character I have given of the clergy, I appeal to the history of the church, since the reign of Constantine the Great, if it has not been too general. But I never consider a general character of any body of men, as extending to every individual of that body. I have the greatest veneration for many worthy gentlemen of that order, who shine in the annals of church-history, and have been distinguished ornaments to their profession. And I am glad to find so many of them in this age cloathed with the meekness and humility of their Master, while tyrannical and haughty sentiments are falling from their elevation — owing, no doubt, not a little to the experience mankind have had of the fatal effects of the prevalence of such sentiments in the breasts of Mr Gib and his brethren.

I can heartily own, that the characters were too generally applied; however, I hope the candid part of the world will excuse me, from the consideration of the specimen I have had of the clergy in Mr Gib's synod, and also of the example I have got ever since I was a child. It is well known, that the party I belonged to, represent the whole body of a gospel-ministry in the most disadvantageous light, and only except themselves. I shall only appeal to their *Solemn Warning* for a proof of what I have advanced, where the greatest part of our modern clergy are represented as men, or rather beasts of the field, "ruling with force and cruelty, and gratifying their carnal interests and lusts," &c. It would seem,

seem, then, that Mr Gib is highly offended, because I will not go so far in the calumnious abuse of the ministry as he and his brethren go. For they  
 “ scruple not to treat this ministry in a body as a  
 “ public nuisance on the earth ; so that if their ac-  
 “ count of them were just, they would be only fit  
 “ for being abominated by all others, and extirpa-  
 “ ted from among men.”

Mr Gib concludes his *view of calumnious abuse*,—raging at me, because I exhort Christians to *love and mutual forbearance*. And no wonder, because I might as well have said,—*Be not followers of Mr Gib*. He gives me also a hint, that he expects certain bodily pains and evils to be inflicted on me, because I have *brought to light the hidden things of dishonesty committed by the synod* ; and, I firmly believe, if Mr Gib be possessed of the power of working miracles, such a punishment will be inflicted ere long.

I shall now proceed to consider that part of Mr Gib's performance, which he calls *Falsehoods detected*.—The first falsehood he pretends to detect in my *Vindication* is this : “ A number of lies, forged to blacken my character, had been industriously propagated by the clergy, a long time before the synod.” He owns, that several such reports were spread ; but he tells us, “ whatever falsehood might be in any of them, no members of the synod could be answerable for it, as they only spoke of these reports among themselves ; some brethren employing others who had readily access, to speak with himself about them.” If one word of this account be true, let the reader judge from what follows.

These reports were told to Mr Gib by Mr Alexander Oliver in the month of May 1762. Soon after, Mr Gib came over to Mr Thomson's sacrament at Path-head, and entertained the company with these

these idle stories at the Monday's dinner, while not only ministers, but their wives, and others, were present. Immediately the clergy propagated these rumours through the whole country, particularly about sacramental occasions, as is well known to many: yet none of them ever spoke to me about any of them, till some months after, and that only accidentally. How then Mr Gib can assert the contrary, is truly very odd.

He denies, too, that in that letter which he wrote to me, after I was appointed to be taken on trials for licence, he spoke any thing "about the synod's either having or not having the least suspicion of my unsoundness in principles." Read the following sentence of his letter, which I have still by me, and see if it does not include as much. — "The appointment which the synod laid upon you," (for *America*, viz.), "in its nature contained a burial of all stories concerning you, and of all dissatisfactions with you," &c. Surely one would think, that they could not have been free from all dissatisfactions with me, if they had entertained any such suspicions. — It is strange, then, that the expositor should give any insinuations of such a suspicion. It was surely very inconsistent to appoint a man to go to America to preach Christ, while they had any reason to suspect his principles. How inconsistent is the conduct of dishonesty! — But the fact is, no such suspicion ever entered their mind, till want of health prevented my voyage. Then some pretences of such a suspicion were carefully put on; that when one method of punishment failed, another might prove successful.

2dly, He denies that any one member of the synod knew that I had recommended the *Essay on liberty and necessity*, when I was appointed to go to America. This is a gross falsehood. When Mr Blyth and Mr Walker asked at me, the summer before this appointment took place, what book I had



recommended, which made such a noise among the ministers? — I told them, that it was an essay in a book, intitled, *Essays on the principles of morality and natural religion*. As they had not read that performance, they could say nothing about it. However, this is a plain evidence that they knew of my recommendation. And that Mr Gib knew, I am perfectly positive, as one of my students spoke of it to Mr Oliver, who told it to Mr Gib in May 1762.

3dly, He is very much offended at the account I have given of the ground of the sentence, and alleges, that “no ground of sentence so laid, was ever in their minutes.” This is another falsehood; — for although it be not so laid in the minute published by Mr Gib, yet it was precisely so laid in the minute read before I was excommunicated. He owns, that the minute he has published, was not composed when I left the synod; it behoved, then, to be some other minute which I heard read. But after all, what need is there for such raging about this, when the account I have given contains the substance of Mr Gib’s minute?

4thly, He asserts, that the author of the essay was not called a *Deist* and an *Atheist* by any member of synod. But Mr Gib has forgot: he himself and several others gave him these epithets at different times; and it is well known the people gave him these names immediately after the synod, which they could only learn from their ministers. Besides, Mr Gib insinuates, that the author’s name was mentioned, and his book called *Deistical*, which is the same with calling the author a *Deist*. But it is easy to see why he denies this charge; — the author is alive, and in power; — *Oderunt peccare mali formidine pœne*.

5thly, He is angry at these expressions, — “The essay was by them condemned before it was read; — they found errors in it before they read it,” &c. How he can term these assertions *falsehoods*, I profess



selfs I cannot tell. He does not refuse that he condemned the essay on Tuesday, and owns that he never read it till Wednesday. He acknowledges also, that only one member had read that essay, besides himself. All the rest, then, behoved to find errors in it, and condemn it before they read it, yea before they heard it read;—for Mr Gib owns, that only a few passages of it were read in the synod.

6thly, He calls these assertions *falsehoods*:—“ I was condemned unheard;—with great difficulty I was permitted to tell what view I had of the book after Mr Gib had expounded it;—I was not allowed to show the falsity of his reasonings,” &c. The truth of these complaints will appear from what follows. After Mr Gib’s tedious dissertation, the members,—inflamed by his eloquence, were about to proceed to censure, without asking whether I had changed my views of the essay or not. Upon this Mr Alexander Oliver, sensible of the absurdity of such procedure, rose up, and begged of the synod,—that I might be permitted to tell what answer I had to give to Mr Gib’s objections. This was granted with great difficulty. I then took notice of Mr Gib’s first objection, *viz.* That according to the essay, *physical* and *moral necessity* are the same. Any who have read that essay must know, that I could be at no loss to answer that cavil. This I did in the space of about three minutes. A brother then cried, “ Is Mr Pirie going to instruct the synod, Moderator? I think the synod may be supposed to know the meaning of that book as well as he.” I was then ordered to sit down, and the cry rose, *Proceed to censure.* How then Mr Gib can represent me as an idiot, who could not speak to the point, is inconceivable; especially since he owns that I offered “ to give the reasons why I judged the essay sound.” These reasons I could not give, without answering Mr Gib’s objections. He alleges too, that no member of synod ever said, that

“ a child of eight years of age might have seen errors in the essay.” But he has forgot. Let him ask the Reverend Mr Ellis in Paisley, and I can presume so far upon the integrity of that gentleman, as to believe that he will not deny it.

7thly, “ He pours out a deal of virulence,” because I charge the synod with that account of my case, which was published in the Scots Magazine; and tells me, “ that no one member of the synod had any concern with that account.” But I ask Mr Gib, — Did not the synod-clerk insert that account? I myself heard him say so. Do not the minutes of your synod appear in the Magazine every year almost? Must they not be inserted by the permission of the synod? Surely, else the clerk would not presume to do it. — Moreover, Mr Gib owns that this account is not just; yet he never endeavoured to undeceive the world by inserting the true account in that Magazine; nor has the clerk been rebuked for publishing a lie. These are surely plain evidences that no other minute of the synod’s procedure was at that time formed. Thus still I must charge the synod with that account.

He affirms, also, that these passages of the essay were read on Thursday evening; whereas I was communicated at the forenoon’s federunt.

But the most wicked and malicious reflection that perhaps ever was made, is to be found in a note at the bottom of p. 101. p. 102. He maintains, that he “ can conceive no other who can be meant,” in relating the story referred to, “ but the late Reverend Mr Alexander Moncrieff; unless it should be perhaps the late Reverend Mr George Brown.” A piece of true deceit. He knew very well, that nothing could render me more odious to the common people, than to represent me as doing injury to the memory of those two late fathers, whom they so much and so justly esteemed. But this story has no more relation to them, than it

has

has to Mr Gib. The gentleman I had in view is still a member of Mr Gib's synod; nor did I abuse him, as I have not named him, but only charged such a prejudice with uncharitableness. Here the *man of sin* may learn the energy of deceit.

Thus Mr Gib, in his pretended detection of *falsehoods*, has found none, but advanced eleven himself.

I proceed now to make a few reflections on his state of the synod's procedure. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, He alledges, that the synod dealt with me some time about Mr Wotherspoon's paper, but "could obtain no satisfaction." This is a great falsehood. I was interrogated, indeed, if I had spoke lightly of that essay, as if it had contained little good or ill. To which I answered as I have related in my *Vindication*. Upon this the members stared one another in the face, but spoke not one word more about it. Their gestures, indeed, intimated to me, that they designed to speak of it afterwards; but their hurry to forward the sentence made them forget it. For as Mr Gib owns, it was not so much as spoke of that day I was excommunicated.

2<sup>dly</sup>, He affirms, that I would not take with this charge at first. But the truth is, I ever took with it, although never in the way it was laid by the synod.—He is mistaken, too, in affirming, that I was Mr Wotherspoon's teacher: it is well known he was pupil to Mr Mason.—As to this young gentleman's essay, it indeed looks black enough by Mr Gib's unfair quotations; but if any one would find the real meaning of it, let him read the essay itself, and, I believe, he will be apt to think that the author had no design to publish any such errors. This is the reason which induced me to speak favourably of the essay; but since the author has confessed before the synod, that it contains principles  
everlive



everfive of the whole doctrines of Christianity, it is time to change my sentiments about it, and to declare my detestation of it.

3dly, He alledges, that the fynod "could not but reckon themselves called to some exemplary procedure in my case, considering the heavy work they had already got among their hands about the modern ways of some of my students." According to Mr Gib's fly insinuation, one would think that the fynod had had a vast deal of trouble with my pupils. Whereas never any of them has been accused before them but one, (Mr Andrew Marshall): but I truly thought he gave them no heavy work, as he was called before them, his essay was read, and himself excommunicated the same hour.

4thly, He tells the world, that "the proceeding to censure came on very heavily and gradually." It is very strange how Mr Gib can have the front to assert this, while he owns that they forgot to read one of the articles of my condemnation, viz. Mr Wotherspoon's affair, before I was excommunicated; and complains that I went off, before they got time to insert it in their minutes. Such was their hurry to accelerate the excommunication, that the sentence was intimated before the reasons of it; and I must be reckoned culpable, because I would not wait to hear the reasons of the sentence after it was inflicted, or because I would not wait to see what proficiency they had made in *Cupar justice*, — *Hang a man and then judge him.* — Besides, in the space of one hour they formed a full resolution to excommunicate me, although before a brother had prayed for light and direction, (after they were determined to receive none), the roll was called, and votes marked, and the sentence intimated, — near another hour was past. If this was a gradual and heavy procedure, let the world judge. He denies, too, that any one member raised the cry, "Proceed to censure;" and indeed not any one only



only raised this cry, but several members. So far then Mr Gib is in the right.

5thly, He is very offended at my declarations before the synod in order to give satisfaction. And no wonder, because they were not designed to be satisfied; and therefore when I gave all the satisfaction which a man could give, this could not fail to offend them, because this might tend to retard them in the delightful work of excommunication.

6thly, The expositor alledges, that "the synod could not imagine that Mr Pirie might still continue to be of the same principles without any bad consequences." I ask Mr Gib, what principles he means? The errors he affirms to be in that essay? If so, I am sure nothing can be more wicked, than to charge a man with errors in another man's book, merely because he cannot see these errors, while he declares his detestation of them where-ever they are. Even although such errors should be in that essay, yet I am not obliged to see them there, or to see with Mr Gib's eyes. It is very odd indeed, that Mr Gib should set up his judgment about the essay as infallible, and oblige all others to view it in the same light, under the penalty of being hereticated and excommunicated. If this is not Popery, I know not what it is!

Should such a term of communion obtain among Christians, or should the judgment of a court be the rule of our judgment about books,—then none but *Antinomians* can join those who are usually called *Marrow-men*. In the judgment of the General Assembly, the *Marrow of modern divinity* contains *Antinomian* doctrines:—must, therefore, all who cannot find these errors in it be reckoned *Antinomians*? Nothing could be more wicked than such a thought; yet, according to Mr Gib's rule, we must unavoidably impute these principles to them, and consequently to himself and his brethren.—Again, the generality of Protestants charge *Calvin's* scheme

scheme with all the consequences which Mr Gib deduces from the *Essayist's*; — must we therefore impute all these consequences to the Calvinists, while they absolutely deny them? If the expositor will not not allow this, then I see no reason why I should be charged with the errors of that *essay*, even provided they were in it. But this is no new rule among the Antiburghers. They put a meaning upon the religious clause of the *burgess-oath*. — This meaning must be infallibly certain; therefore all who cannot see it in this light must be *Anathema*.

7thly, Mr Gib tells us, that the synod got information of my recommendation of that book at a meeting April 21. 1763, which information “they could not neglect;” and therefore appointed, that the brethren of the presbytery of Perth, &c. should advertise me to attend next meeting of synod. But is it not very extraordinary, that the synod should be so much alarmed at this report, and should appoint me to attend next meeting to answer for it, while after all only one of them read it between that and next meeting? Surely, had they been much alarmed at it, or had they acted as rationals, — when they were to deal with me about that book, they would have found as much leisure as would have been sufficient for a perusal of it, between April and September. But so far from this, although Mr Gib owns that he was particularly “struck with the information,” yet even he did not read that essay before the fatal meeting of synod. Could any conduct be more absurd?

8thly, He is persuaded that I myself will acknowledge, “that the synod’s sentence is unexceptionable, providing their judgment of the essay be just.” If I adhered to it in their view, no doubt I might reckon their sentence in some measure just; but I have viewed it in a different light, in which Mr Gib himself must own it is found: and so the synod’s sentence is absurd, provided my view of the essay

essay be just. The question is then, Whether is my judgment about the essay or Mr Gib's just? It seems to be determined on my side, as the author has declared, in the *Appendix*, that his sentiments are Calvinistic, and all the most sensible members of the general assembly viewed it in the same light. However it be, I cannot view my appeal to the court of heaven as a "strange affair;" since I am not carrying the defence of the essay, but my judgment about it, to that tribunal, *i. e.* I can maintain at that tribunal, that I never viewed it in Mr Gib's light, and that in my judgment it contains the doctrines of Calvin.

Thus, after all that Mr Gib has advanced, I still maintain, that the conduct of the synod in my case was irregular, sudden, absurd, uncharitable, scandalous, and unprecedented; and I defy Mr Gib, with all the artifice he is master of, to prove the contrary.

I shall only observe upon the whole, that it is very odd, that Mr Gib's synod would not allow ruling elders to judge in matters of faith and cases of conscience in the year 1747; whereas, in the year 1763, he allowed them to be judges in matters of philosophy! It is strange how men can wrest church-government to subserve their wicked purposes! How inconsistent is the conduct of passion and prejudice!

My next business is, to examine Mr Gib's dissertation on the *Essay on liberty and necessity*.—When he sets out, one would think, that he is about to lead his readers into the subject by the shortest way he can, and to set all its hidden horrors in the clearest point of view. But instead of this, he leads us into a long portico of *preliminary considerations*, and a pretended account of Calvin's doctrine of *liberty and necessity*. Where we want arguments, we must use many words.

As he enters the threshold he meets great opposition.



tion. There he meets with the *Essayist*, the *Examinator*, and the *Observer*; — all which enemies are obliged to yield to his superior force. However, after he has knocked these in the head, up starts Mr Pirie, who endeavours to terrify him with a noise about *far-fetched arguments*, *strained inferences*, and *ill-connected consequences*. Now, says the Expositor, “use what *judgment* and *caution*” I can in entering the *essay*, still I must be stunned with Mr Pirie’s cry, *Far-fetched arguments!* &c. This makes him “heartless about “meddling in this business.” However, he at last gets clear of Mr Pirie also, and is just about to enter his subject; — but in a moment he is engaged in a squabble with the *Essayist*’s good intentions, his incapacity to discern the connection between his own principles and Mr Gib’s consequences, and the *inconsistencies* of the *essay*. Then he detains us a while longer tearing off the “patches of a different colour,” which he finds sticking on the surface of the *essay*. — But Mr Gib might have led us into the subject, without staying so long to fight with shadows: none of these obstacles have any existence save only in Mr Gib’s own imagination.

However impatient we are to be introduced to the *essay*; yet before we can be admitted, after this tedious preface, we must hear the Expositor *harangue*, I know not how long, about Calvin’s doctrine of *Liberty and Necessity*. This trial of our patience, indeed, might have been borne, had he given us any fair account of his doctrine upon that head: — but, instead of this, he entertains us with a prolix dissertation on *matter*, its *existence*, *motion*, *inertia*, *creation*, *chaotical state*, *arrangement*, *mysterious combinations*, &c. &c. — all quite foreign to his purpose; which can serve no other end, but to shew us how fond Mr Gib is to display his own abilities. Of the same kind is his *harangue* about the *soul*, its *understanding*, *will*,  
moral

*moral disposition, &c.* These have very little more connection with the doctrine of *Liberty and Necessity* than the *moon* has with *green cheese*. However, before I begin to pursue him through the *absurdities* and *errors* of his own scheme, I shall consider what he says against the essay, and give the reasons why I am not convinced of error in it, after all that this old writer has advanced.

He pretends to have found one very essential error in the essay, *viz.* That this universe is a vast machine, winded up and set a-going, which produces all the events which its Maker determined, without his concurring influence; or, that there is no Providence. This is the principle from which Mr Gib deduces his ten *ridiculous consequences*. We must, then, first see if such a principle is to be found in the essay: — if it is, I shall willingly own it erroneous; if not, it will be vain to take any notice of Mr Gib's inferences, as they must necessarily perish with their principles.

It is true enough that the *Essayist* compares this world to a machine; but where he alledges that this machine is set out of God's hand, independent of his influence, I suppose only the penetrating genius of Mr Gib can find out: I must own it lies beyond my reach. The principal quotation from the essay from which this inference is drawn, follows. "This universe is a vast machine, winded up, and set a-going. The several springs and wheels operate unerringly one upon another. The hand advances, and the clock strikes, precisely as the artist hath determined." Now, I ask any unprejudiced person, if there be any denial of God's providential influence here, or any assertion in the least inconsistent with it? That this world is a piece of divine machinery, which, under his influence, produces all the events which God comprehended in his original plan, in that manner, and at that moment, in which he decreed they should happen;

happen; and that the whole train of second causes operate as infallibly and unerringly one upon another, as the springs and wheels of a clock, so as to fulfill the divine purposes,—though Mr Gib deny, yet, I suppose, every man who understands his Bible will allow. The sun unerringly rises and sets. By his motions the day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, regularly succeed one another, precisely as God determined. And what is said of the sun, &c. may be said of all other parts of the universe. Not the smallest atom can transgress the laws which God imposed upon matter, or can do any thing which he never purposed.

Mr Gib, then, gains his conclusion by the most unjustifiable method; — by straining a similitude farther than the author has intended. Since the Essayist compares this universe to a piece of clock-work, so far as its motions are regular, one thing depending upon another, and all concurring to answer the purposes of the maker; — therefore, says the Expositor, it must be like a piece of clock-work in every respect. As a clock, then, when winded up, and set a-going, does not depend upon the influence of the artist, so must this universe perform its revolutions independent of God. But I ask Mr Gib, Does not every similitude halt? Has it not a certain point to which it comes, and no farther? It by no means then follows, that because this universe, with regard to the regularity of its motions, is like a machine, that therefore it is so in every respect. Could this wild inference be admitted, then every book would be filled with nonsense, or worse; particularly the Bible, as it abounds with similitudes. For instance, Job says, “Man would be wise, although he is born a wild ass’s colt.” Drive this similitude as far as it will go, and we make man a wild ass’s colt in every respect. — Thus Mr Gib, in dealing with the Essayist, has taken his old method, of begging the question, and then



then deducing consequences from what still remains to be proved. How excellent an artist is Mr Gib at heretic-making?

I hope, by this time, it is plain, that the Essayist no where asserts any thing inconsistent with the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence. I shall now shew, that he plainly maintains the existence of Providence, or the exertion of divine influence, in supporting and governing all things. "My opinion of the wisdom of Providence, in the government of this world, is so firmly established, that I never can be apprehensive of harm in adhering to truth," &c. p. 157. & p. 161. "These discoveries are also of excellent use, as they furnish us with one of the strongest arguments for the existence of the Deity, and set the wisdom and goodness of his Providence in the most striking light." "I consider man as acting in the great theatre of the world, in which all things are governed by the providence of an Almighty Being." He argues against the Arminian liberty; because, says he, "As it appears to me, the directing influence of Providence is altogether excluded from human actions, by this supposed liberty of indifference." According to it, he adds, human actions "cannot be under the direction of the Deity.—The influence of the Deity must be superior to all other motives in determining the will; and, consequently, must have the effect to make man a necessary agent in the sense of moral necessity. Man, then, by this supposed power, is withdrawn from under the government of Providence," &c. p. 175. "All things in the moral, as well as material world, proceed according to settled laws, established by Providence. We have a just ground of conviction, that all things are by Providence ordered in the best manner," &c. p. 296. I hope any one who reads these passages, will soon see why I am not convinced that the Essayist denies a providence.

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Since then this is the principle upon which Mr Gib builds all his conclusions, it is easy to see, that they are all built upon a sandy foundation. This is nothing but a man of straw, framed by his own wild fancy; and it would truly be a pity to rob Mr Gib of the pleasure of lashing him heartily, and of tying a train of consequences to his tail, as black and frightful as he pleases. — No such principle is to be found in the essay; and, consequently, it would be vain to take the least notice of Mr Gib's inferences. The foundation is overthrown, and so all his superstructure must fall, and bury his reasonings in its ruin.

Another principle which he pretends to have found in the essay, and from which he takes no little assistance in his reasoning, is, — That man has no liberty, but a delusive sense of it, since motives influence his mind to act precisely in the same manner in which the wind moves a weathercock. Where Mr Gib has found this principle, I cannot tell; as he has not given us so much as one quotation from the essay, on which he so much as pretends to found it. By such chicanery, by such detestable artifice, one may impute any principle to any author he pleases. I can impute this to nothing but pure malice. Let any one read the following quotations from the essay; and, if he can believe what Mr Gib advances, he may easily give credit to the doctrine of transubstantiation. “ In the moral world, this  
“ necessary chain of causes and effects, appears not  
“ so clearly. Man is the actor here. He is endued  
“ with will, and he acts from choice. He hath a  
“ power of beginning motion, which is subject to  
“ no mechanical laws; and therefore he is not under  
“ what is called physical necessity. He hath  
“ appetites and passions which prompt him to their  
“ respective gratifications; but he is under no necessity  
“ of blindly submitting to their impulse; for  
“ reason hath a power of restraint. It suggests motives  
“ tives

“tives from the cool views of good and evil. He  
 “deliberates upon these. In consequence of his  
 “deliberation, he chuseth: and here, if any where,  
 “lies our liberty,” *p.* 121. 122. “A man in doing  
 “what is worthy of praise or blame, must be free  
 “from external coercion, and at liberty to follow  
 “his own choice,” &c. *p.* 143. And, indeed, the  
 sum of the *Essayist's* doctrine is, That man is a ne-  
 cessary, yet free or voluntary agent.

A third principle this old writer ascribes to the  
*Essayist* is, That the necessity which obtains in the u-  
 niverse, is *Stoical* fate. Stoical fate is nothing but  
 an inviolable chain of causes and effects, founded  
 solely upon nature, without reference to supreme  
 intelligence or design: but no such principle has the  
 least countenance in the essay. The very contrary is  
 constantly taught: Says the *Essayist*, “The Divine  
 “Being decreed all future events,” *p.* 138. “The  
 “Deity is the first cause of all things. He formed,  
 “in his infinite mind, the great plan or scheme up-  
 “on which all things were to be governed,” *p.* 154.  
 Necessity here arises only from his decree, whose  
 will is fate.

4thly, Mr Gib would have the *Essayist* to make  
 God the author of sin, because he asserts, that  
 “with regard to a first cause, *permitting* is the  
 “same thing with *causing*; since contrary to his  
 “will, nothing can happen,” *p.* 140. But Mr Gib  
 maintains all that the *Essayist* can intend by this ex-  
 pression. He never can intend to make God the  
 author of sin, while he is proving that he is not its  
 author. Nor can he mean that *permission* is of the  
 same nature, or acts in the precise manner with an  
*efficient cause*. Yet permission must be a kind of  
 cause, as it has an effect; for every thing which pro-  
 duces an effect, is called a cause. Now, Mr Gib  
 allows, that permitting and causing “agree as to  
 “the infallibility of the event which is permitted  
 “or caused; its being as infallible in the one case  
 “as



“ as in the other.” Thus, if I have a stone in my hand, the stone will as inevitably fall to the ground, provided I withdraw my hand from it, or permit it to fall, as if I had exerted *influence* in throwing it down, or in causing it to fall. Thus, as to the certainty of the futurition of the event, *permitting* is the same thing with *causing*; and I suppose the Essayist never intended to carry the similitude any farther. Indeed, if he had pleased, he might have used a more safe expression, as this is liable to be mistaken; although I own such expressions are commonly used by our Calvinistic divines. I shall only instance in *Turretine*, who asserts, that *Decretum est causa futuritionis peccati*. “ The decree is the cause of the futurition of sin.” *Institutio theologiae*, vol. 1. p. 341.\*

These are the only errors he pretends to find in the essay; and I now refer it to all the world, if I have not the best reason to cry, “ Far-fetched arguments, strained inferences, and ill-connected consequences!”

WEARIED of the languid uniformity of a conti-

\* I know some scruple at the definition of sin given by the Essayist, *viz.* “ Sin lies in the evil intention of him who commits it,” &c.; as if by this the author would teach, that the goodness of our intention makes a wicked action good. But it is to be considered, that in every action there are two intentions,—one of the mean, and another of the end. Now, although we should intend a good end, yet if we intend to use a bad mean, or to do an action contrary to the law of God, in order to gain that end,—we still have a bad intention in our action. No action can be moral without intention or design; and the sinfulness of an action must lie where its morality lies. This is quite consistent with the definition of sin commonly given, *viz.* “ Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God.” An action is evil, as it is contrary to God’s law; but it cannot be contrary to God’s law, unless it arise from intention or design. — It is also to be observed, that the author, here, is not defining sin, but the rise of it. It lies in evil intention and the corrupt affections of the sinner: from thence, according to him, all evil actions spring; so that God is by no means the author of sin. This is scripture-doctrine, — *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*, &c. Math. xv. 19.

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nued defence, I shall now change hands, and try what I can do in making an attack. Let me make nearer approaches to the Expositor's doctrine, which he boasts of as impregnable. Perhaps, upon a narrow inspection, we shall find it to be nothing but a chaos of errors, absurdities, and nonsense ;— a wall I shall now attempt to beat down : for which end, I undertake to prove,

1<sup>st</sup>, That, according to Mr Gib's scheme, God is the proper cause of sin, nor can men be blamed for their sinful actions.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That his doctrine of liberty and necessity is not Calvinistic.

3<sup>dly</sup>, That he has advanced all the doctrines of Arminians on this head.

Before I begin, it may be proper to tell him, that I shall deal as fairly with him as he does with the Essayist.— I shall not charge these consequences upon himself, but upon his doctrines ; “ for I have no “ business with what or how many consequences an “ author pleases, or pleases to own, that his doctrine should have ; but with such consequences “ as the doctrine itself will have.”

1<sup>st</sup>, According to his scheme, God is the proper cause of sin ; as appears from his definition of a cause and an effect. “ Two things which we see always, or “ at least usually, going together,— so as the one accompanies or follows upon the other, and in such “ a manner, that we readily expect the one to be “ with or from the other ; — reckoning, in many “ cases, that they could not be separated without a “ miracle\*.” A definition, which, if pursued into all its consequences, would overthrow all philosophy and religion both ! A definition, which is as contrary to common sense, as to the opinion of all who have wrote on the subject, save the author of the *Treatise on human nature*.

According to this foolish definition, a man's legs,

arms, or eyes, &c. stand to one another in the relation of cause and effect; because we see them "always going together, so as that the one accompanies the other." The striking of the clock is the cause of the shutting or opening of the gates of a city; because they are usually shut and opened at a certain hour. — The essence of a cause lies not in the exertion of influence, but in its proximity or union to the effect. Hence, if God and this universe stand in the relation of cause and effect, God exerted no influence in the production of this universe; he is only united to it; and, consequently, it existed from eternity as well as he. According to this, it is vain to talk about second causes, powers, or laws of nature; since there is no power in the universe, but the power of God. Thus, it overthrows all philosophy, — and religion must share the same fate; because religion supposes that man is possessed of a power distinct from the divine power, otherwise he cannot be accountable for any of his actions. If man cannot act, but is acted upon by God, as a tool is employed by the artist, then God is the proper cause of all human actions, as well as of all motion in the universe; and, consequently, man can be no more accountable for any action, than a tool, an axe, or a hammer, in the hand of an artist. Thus, if there be such a thing as sin in the universe, God must be its author, since a tool can be the author of nothing. — There can be no state of rewards or punishments, because an axe or hammer can never be the objects either of rewards or punishments.

— Could I believe Mr Gib's blasphemy, then, when I commit any sinful action, I should never be blamed for it. He who exerts his power in producing the effect, is only to be blamed; but, in this case, I exert no power, and so am subject to no blame: I am only a tool, and therefore all the evil that is done, is to be accounted for by the artist who employs the tool.

Moreover, if this notion be allowed, *permission*



is a proper cause, because God's permission of sin is connected with sin; "so that the one accompanies or follows upon the other." *Permitting*, then, according to Mr Gib, is *causing* in the strictest sense of the word.

Again, the Expositor asserts, "That the sinfulness of a man and of his actions, is a sort of *annihilation*," p. 42. If sin be a sort of annihilation, then God must be its proper cause, since it is a received maxim, *Cujus est creare, ejus est annihilare*. No created being can annihilate any thing more than it can create it. Man, then, has no hand in sin, because he cannot annihilate any thing.

Nothing can appear more horrid to me, than the definition Mr Gib gives of sin. "Sin," says he, "is a not-being, or nothing," p. 42. A not-being is commonly defined — a creature of the brain, which has no real existence; such as, *a flying horse, a mountain hung in the air, &c.* Thus sin is not in the world, or there is no sin; for, according to this definition, sin has no more existence than a flying horse, or a *centaur*; which exists no where but in our brain. — This would make many texts of scripture speak nonsense. Thus, when God says, "Oh! do not that abominable thing which I hate!" the meaning must be, Oh! do not that abominable nothing! &c.

This is also contrary to the definition given in the Catechism; according to which, sin is not only a want, but an actual *transgression*: — it does not only consist in the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the want of original righteousness, but also in the corruption of the whole nature. Now, corruption of our nature is certainly something, *viz.* a moral quality, habit, or disposition of mind, productive of actions which are contrary to the law of God. These qualities, modes, habits, or dispositions, we are capable of producing ourselves, by the permission of God. *Natural beings*, indeed, are the pro-

ductions of divine power immediately ; but *moral beings*, our dispositions and actions, are properly caused by ourselves, and only permitted by God.

2dly, I proposed to prove, That Mr Gib's doctrine of liberty and necessity is not Calvinistic. In order to which, I shall take a view of his doctrine of that liberty and necessity which belongs to the *material* world, and then proceed to consider what liberty and necessity he ascribes to the *moral*.

He allows only two kinds of necessity to the *material* world, viz. a necessity of the *event*, or " of things being what they are, and as they are, while they are so ;" and a necessity of *dependence* upon God's providential influence \*. But neither of these two is the necessity proper to the *material* world, since each of them belongs no less to the *moral* world than to the world of *matter*. The necessity proper to the latter, is by all Calvinists, yea, by all our writers on that subject, called *physical necessity*, or a necessity of subjection to the laws of *matter* and *motion*, which God has established in the material world ; — by which, in concurrence with his providential influence, God ordinarily carries his plan of government in that world to execution. Thus, all the parts of *matter* are subject to the laws of nature, or powers of *attraction*, *repulsion*, *gravity*, &c. because it hath pleased God to endue matter with these powers.

All sound philosophers and divines agree in this opinion, — that there are such laws or powers of nature, quite distinct from the power of the Deity, although his power constantly concurs with all the operations of second causes. Thus second causes are proper causes, as they are endued with power to produce the effect. This is directly opposite to Mr Gib's doctrine. According to him, there is no power in second causes at all, but the divine power only produces every event. He tells us, that there

is only such a connection between a second cause and its effect, as is betwixt a tool and materials; *i. e.* there is no more power in a second cause, than there is in an axe or a hammer.—So that we are to account for the connection between a cause and an effect, as we account for the connection between a tool and materials, *i. e.* “from the skillful pleasure and power of the artist, in his present employing of the tool,” *p.* 29. I have already shown, that this error, if pursued into all the consequences which it involves, will be found everfive both of philosophy and religion. I shall only give one farther instance of its unhappy tendency to overthrow revelation.—If we believe with the Expositor, we must deny the existence of any miracle. A miracle is a supernatural event, produced by an immediate interposition of divine power, and which cannot happen according to the laws of nature; or, it is a suspension of the influence of the powers or laws of nature for a time. But, according to Mr Gib, there are no powers in nature, or general laws of nature; and consequently God can never suspend the influence of these laws. Every event is produced by God only, and so every event is miraculous. Was this the case, it would surely have been vain for our Saviour or his apostles to have said, *Believe us for our works sake*. People might have told them, We may as well believe all mankind for their works sake, since all actions whatever are the result of the exertions of divine influence.

I might gain the same conclusion by a different method. Thus, if all ordinary events are the result of the exertion of divine influence, then extraordinary events, or miracles, must be the effects of the suspension of that influence. Thus God is the proper cause of every common event, but he is only the permissive cause of any miracle. A proposition no less contrary to common sense, than to scripture! It is also contrary to another of Mr Gib's opinions,



pinionis, viz. That annihilation is the result of the suspension of divine power. If this be true, then there is no miracle but annihilation.

Nor need any think, that I have dealt unfairly with the Expositor, in affirming his denial of the laws of nature. Let them read from the 54th to the 75th page of his book, and they will find it denied in almost every leaf: for instance *p.* 55. he calls these laws *imaginary qualities*, or powers which God is *supposed* to have put into the nature and constitution of things; and in a note at the bottom of *p.* 59. he cannot digest that doctrine, because, thus “every circumstance that can be observed about a hair, a feather, a straw, a grain of dust, or all the motes we see dancing in a sun-beam,” must be subject to the “laws of nature.” Such absurdity!!! Are not all things, the most minute atoms as well as the most bulky globes of this universe, subject to the laws of matter and motion! All mankind, but Mr Gib, and his blind adherents, will allow it. If so, then none of them can possibly, in any given moment, be uninfluenced by these laws, unless God shall suspend the regular operation of the laws of nature. And I defy even Mr Gib to blow a particle of dust off his book, but according to these laws. He indeed has done his utmost to subvert the laws of Christ’s house; but it is vain for him to try to destroy the laws of nature too.

That there are such laws of nature, is not only plain from experience, but from scripture: *For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.—They continue this day according to thine ordinances, or laws\*.* Knowest thou the ordinances (or laws) of heaven†? And that these laws shall continue immutably fixed to the end of time, is evident from a principle of the constitution of human nature, whereby we believe, that as to the general course of

\* Pl. cxix. 89. &c.

† Job xxxviii. 33.

things,

things, there shall be *nothing new under the sun*. It is clear, too, from sacred writ : Says God, *If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then \*, &c.*

I know very well that Mr Gib in several pages contradicts the passages above quoted. But “ what “ can it signify for excusing any part of an author’s “ doctrine,—to bring in some evidence of his con- “ tradicting himself ? and how can the fair side of “ the contradiction give any rational satisfaction to “ a person, if the foul side must be maintained al- “ so,—especially if the foul side is the body of the “ scheme ? ”

I proceed now to consider his scheme of *Liberty and Necessity* in the moral world ;—and here we find him still more Anticalvinistic. All Calvinists allow, that the moral world is governed by these two general laws :—The human mind is necessarily influenced by *motives* ;—That it must *necessarily* act from the *prevailing motive*, or the motive which has the greatest influence on it, whether that motive is in itself strongest or weakest.

Mr Gib, in direct opposition to this doctrine, maintains, “ That there is no sort of necessity from “ any motives whatsoever, neither as they are with- “ out us, nor as they are within us, nor as they are “ in themselves.” Which is the same as if he had said, We are under no necessity to act from motives at all ;—unless, perhaps, he means that we must act from motives considered as out of themselves, which is downright nonsense.

He gives us a deal of jargon about *motives without the mind*, and *motives within the mind*. But all motives are *without the mind*, and only the consideration or perception of motives is *within the mind*. Thus, I intend to fetch a *walk this afternoon*. You ask my *motives* or *reasons* ? I answer,

• Jer. xxxi. 36.

The

*The evening is still and sunny, the sky clear, and a companion invites me.* Now, any one may see, that the *stillness of the evening, the sunshine, the clearness of the sky, and my companion's invitation*, — are all *without my mind*, and only the consideration of these motives is *in my mind*; or their influence only affects my *will* by means of my perception of them.

He produces another very odd *nostrum*, p. 34. 35. Motives, says he, have a great deal of *disadvantage from the corruption of the understanding and the will*. Such nonsense! No doubt, the influence of really good motives, is very much defeated by this corruption; but every one knows, that the more corrupt our mind is, the more easily motives to what is really evil prevail upon it. Thus motives to real evil have a great deal of advantage from such corruption.

The Expositor maintains also, That motives are properly in our power, just as tools are in the power of a workman; *i. e.* we can either use them or not use them, p. 36. But I ask Mr Gib, What of motives is properly in our power? *Not the existence of motives*; for we cannot prevent the existence of time, place, persons, trials, and comforts, &c. which surround us. — Nor can we prevent the *influence of motives*, or be as little affected with them as a workman is by his tools. I suppose, if Mr Gib saw his daughter ready to fall from a precipice, he could not resist the influence of such a motive, but it would oblige him to run to preserve her. Again, honour, gain, his ordination-vows, and, perhaps, a concern for his people's good, have ordinarily confined Mr Gib to Edinburgh since his ordination, as *necessarily, certainly, and infallibly*, as if he had been under a *physical necessity*. It seems he could not resist the influence of these *motives*.

Moreover, if motives are properly in our power,  
then



then it is in our power to frustrate God's decree. For instance, if God has decreed that I shall take a walk this afternoon, he must also have decreed that some motive shall prevail upon me to do so, since we cannot act without motives. Therefore, as I must necessarily fulfill God's decree, so I have it not in my power to resist the motive which influences me to do so, or to suffer the motives which urge me to stay in my chamber to prevail.

Again, if motives are properly in our power, then we may either resist even the strongest motive, or yield to it as we please. This is quite inconsistent with the Calvinistic doctrines of the conversion of a sinner. According to it, the Holy Spirit presents such forcible gospel-motives, attended with such power and energy upon the mind, that the enmity of the heart is overcome; and the person *necessarily*, although willingly, without any coercion or external force, accepts of salvation through Jesus. But upon Mr Gib's, *i. e.* the Arminian scheme, our mind is capable of being the subject of no such necessary influences; because this puts motives properly out of our power, so that we cannot resist their influence.

But Mr Gib is chiefly enraged against the *second* law, whereby man is so constituted, that he must necessarily be determined to act according to the prevailing motive, or the motive which has most influence upon our mind.

According to him, the *Essayist* is erroneous, because he asserts, that "every inclination or choice is unavoidably caused or occasioned by the prevailing motive." He rages also against him, because he alledges, that "this law about motives is a law of God's own making," p. 66.; as if any could give laws to our nature, but God! — Thus, according to him, we are under no necessity to act from motives; we can resist the strongest motive;

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or we are under no necessity to do what appears to us best upon the whole, but may do evil as such.

But as Mr Gib denies a *necessity of motives*, so also a *necessity* arising from the decree. He owns the *necessity* of our dependence upon God's concurrence; but no where does he give us the least hint of our necessary dependence upon his decree in all our actions: on the contrary, he plainly maintains, *1st*, That God has not decreed all things which come to pass. The whole of his reasonings, *p.* 60. and 65. amounts to this,—That there is a possibility that other things may happen, than God has decreed or comprehended in his original plan; and that things may be otherwise than they are even upon supposition of God's decree. Also, in a note at the bottom of *p.* 67. he maintains, that the workings of the mind, fleeting thoughts, and idle fancies, may be otherwise, or may not be. He insinuates, that they are not “under the same necessity with the motions of the *will*;” *i. e.* they are not decreed by God; for if they are decreed by God, then they must as necessarily happen as the motions of the *will*; they are under an utter impossibility of being otherwise; so that the want of any one of these thoughts or fancies, out of any one mind since the creation, would have broke the chain of nature's laws, or God's decrees. Calvinists always maintain, that had not God decreed all events which should happen, then other things than those which happen might have happened, or come into existence; but upon supposition of God's decree, nothing, in any given moment, can possibly be otherwise than it is; nothing can possibly be future, or about to be, but what he decreed to be; and what he decreed to be, must necessarily be. Again, he reckons it an error to say, “that there is nothing “in the whole universe that can properly be called “contingent, that may be or may not be,” *p.* 58. Mr Gib then must reckon the following assertion a truth,

truth, That there are some things presently in this universe, which may properly be called contingent, that may be or may not be ; or there are some things in this *universe* which God never decreed to be. For if God decreed all things which are in the universe, then all things which are in it must be in it ; and so nothing is properly contingent. Calvinists allow, that there are *future contingencies* with respect to us ; but these are not contingencies properly so called, as things properly are as they appear to God, and not as they appear to us.

2dly, He admits of conditional decrees : for, p. 65. he maintains, that man “ may will and chuse otherwise than in fact he wills and chuses.” According to Calvin’s scheme of absolute decrees, we in fact will and chuse just what God foreordained we should will and chuse ; and it is impossible for us to will and chuse otherwise at that time, because God’s decree is absolute, and so we cannot will and chuse what he never decreed we should will and chuse. Therefore if, as Mr Gib alledges, we may will and chuse otherwise than in fact we do, God has either decreed nothing absolutely about human actions, or his decree may be frustrate.

The Expositor has a very Anticalvinistic sentiment, p. 59. He there asserts, that God’s omnipotence can extend to things “ beyond or different from the actual state of this world.” Calvinists, on the contrary, maintain, that *non futura perperam divina potentia dixeris* \* ; things which God has decreed not to be, are not the objects of divine power, because his power cannot go beyond his will †. — And so much for Mr Gib’s Calvinism.

\* De Vries Determin. de Deo, cap. 17. § 3.

† God’s power absolutely considered, can extend to all things *possible*, which may be without a contradiction ; but it cannot create any thing but what he decreed to create. In this view it is called *limited*. Hence, *nothing* can *possibly* be in this universe in any given moment, but what *actually* is in it.



I know that it may be objected to what I have said, That Mr Gib maintains the contrary in the 28th page of his Exposition. I answer, In that page indeed he alledges, that there is an “*infallible necessity* of every event;” —but we must observe, that he is only treating of the *necessity of the material world* in that place. When he comes to speak of the *necessity of human actions*, or of the *moral world*, he maintains the very contrary, as we have already seen. — After all, although he should be supposed to include human actions, this would only serve to shew us how much he excels in contradicting himself.

I proceed, 3dly, to shew, that he has advanced all the doctrines of the Arminians upon this head.

It is well known, that the Arminians deny, that there is any necessity of human actions arising from the decree of God; and we have found Mr Gib of the same sentiment. 2dly, They deny that we are under any necessity to act from motives; and maintain, that the freedom of the *will* is a power to act without and contrary to motives: They own that we use motives, but deny that we necessarily do so. Mr Gib asserts the very same. He owns, that the human will uses motives as tools; but denies that it necessarily does so. He maintains, too, that we can resist the strongest motive; and reckons it an error to say, that “every inclination or choice is “unavoidably caused or occasioned by the prevailing motive,” p. 66. He, indeed, pretends to deny, that human liberty consists in indifference; and yet he evidently maintains the contrary: for, p. 77. he affirms, That the liberty which the *Essayist* denies, is “just the liberty which all men have a “natural sense of.” Now, the liberty which the *Essayist* denies is, a liberty to act in contradiction to our desires and inclinations, or to act without and in opposition to all motives\*. Thus the li-

\* See the Essay, p. 134. 135. 136.

erty all men have a natural sense of, is a liberty of *indifference*.

That this is his real sentiment, is farther clear from *p. 66*. There he reckons it an error to maintain, That "the last judgment of the *understanding*, the *will*, and the *external action*,—necessarily follow in the most inviolable train of absolute necessity." The Expositor's opinion, then, must be, That we can *will* in opposition to our *understanding*, and act freely in opposition to our *will*. This is somewhat farther than the Arminians have ever gone.

Again, the Arminians make the will to determine itself; so does Mr Gib. Thus, for instance, *p. 79. 80*. He asserts, That the last judgment of the understanding, and the will, is the same thing; and that the former is nothing but the latter's "being actually in motion!" And as an evidence of his keenness upon this point, he tells me, that when I say, the will follows the last judgment of the understanding, I might as well have said, that "the moon is made of green cheese." Now, if the last judgment of the understanding, and the will, be the same, then surely the will determines itself.

But this opinion is no less repugnant to common sense than to Calvinism. Every one knows, that there is a great difference between the last judgment or determination of the understanding, and our will to act according to that determination. Our mind must first determine what is best or worst upon the whole, before our will can chuse the one or reject the other, although the motion of the will immediately follows that determination.—I would also ask Mr Gib, by the by, What idea he himself has of that absurd assertion, The last judgment of the understanding is the will actually in motion? Had you said, that it is the will determining itself to move, we might have formed some notion of your meaning;

ing; but to say, that it is the will actually in motion, is at least inconceivable sense.

Another evidence of his Arminianism follows. The accountableness of human actions, according to his scheme, depends upon their freedom from all necessity; or, man cannot be an accountable agent, if he be a necessary agent. The sum of his doctrine in pages 65. and 66. amounts to this:— He tells us, that “if there be a regular train of causes and effects according to the laws of nature, bringing about those events which are comprehended in the original plan;” *i. e.* if God, by those laws which he has made, be still bringing about those events which he decreed necessarily and infallibly; then as all mens actions were decreed, no blame can lie “at man’s door, who did not make those established and immutable laws, but is only living in a regular subjection to them with all his actions.” The meaning of this must be,— Because God decreed all human actions, and so made them necessary; therefore man is not accountable for his actions. — Again, he tells us, that if the human mind necessarily acts from motives, and every inclination of the mind be determined necessarily by the prevailing motive, then, says he, (blasphemously), all the blame is to be “rolled over upon the fatal motive, which God only is accountable for!!!” Who does not see, that the Expositor thus makes the accountableness of human actions rest upon their freedom from God’s decree, and from motives? This is quite the reverse of Calvin’s doctrine, *viz.* That the voluntariness of actions renders them accountable, and that punishments are justly inflicted on those who commit evil, provided only they were voluntary in their guilt, although the action be at the same time necessary.

HAVING reviewed the Expositor’s grand doctrine of liberty and necessity, I shall here give a summary  
of



of my sentiments upon that head, that so my readers may understand the real difference betwixt the synod and me, by the contrasting of our sentiments.

At first our difference seemed to turn upon the meaning of a book; but now we widely differ in matters of far greater importance. For instance, Mr Gib, or the synod, maintains, That there is no *physical necessity*, no powers, no causes, no effects, in the material world, or no laws of nature, no ordinances of heaven. On the contrary, I maintain, That there is such a necessity; or, there are powers in nature, or laws of nature, by which all effects in the material world are produced, in concurrence with God's providential influence. *2dly*, They affirm, That many things are contingent, which may be or may not be, and that they are properly so. I assert on the contrary, That upon supposition of God's decree, or properly, nothing is contingent, that may be, or may not be; but every thing must either necessarily be, or necessarily not be. Things are only contingent with respect to us. *3dly*, Mr Gib alledges, That men are not necessary agents; or, they are under no necessity to have their will influenced by motives, and to act according to the prevailing motive. I maintain, on the contrary, That we are under such a necessity. *4thly*, The synod think, That there is no difference between the last judgment of the understanding and the will; and that there is no necessary connection between these two and the external action. I affirm, That there is a difference between the two former; and that they are necessarily connected with the external action; because we cannot act contrary to our understanding and will. *5thly*, The Expositor affirms, That there is a possibility of things happening which God never decreed to happen, and that men may will and chuse otherwise than God has fore-ordained. The very contrary is my opinion:—God has decreed all things past, present, and to come; and all

all his decrees are absolute. 6thly, Mr Gib thinks, That God's power can extend to things which shall never happen. In opposition to this, I affirm, That had he not decreed those things not to happen, his power could have produced them; but now his power is limited by his will. 7thly, The synod reckon, That the accountableness of human actions depends upon their freedom from all necessity. Whereas I judge, that men are accountable for their actions, if they are committed voluntarily, although they are absolutely necessary. That we may be accountable for our actions, we must be free from external co-action and constraint, and at liberty to act voluntarily, or from choice; herein consists human liberty: but our actions must be at the same time necessary, 1. with regard to God's decree; 2. his concurrence, or providential influence; 3. with regard to motives; 4. the last judgment of the understanding.

That what I have advanced, is the Calvinistic doctrine, will be plain from the following quotations from our best divines of that persuasion.

The learned *Francis Turretine*, professor in Geneva, in his *Institut. Theolog. vol. 1. p. 566.* gives the sum of what I have said, as follows.

“ There are only two kinds of *necessity* which are  
 “ inconsistent with liberty; physical necessity, and  
 “ the necessity of constraint. The other kinds of  
 “ necessity, which arise either from the decree or  
 “ influence of God, or from the object itself, and  
 “ the last judgment of the understanding, are so far  
 “ from overthrowing liberty, that they rather esta-  
 “ blish it; because they do not constrain the will,  
 “ but persuade it, and produce a voluntary choice  
 “ in one that was before unwilling. For what a  
 “ man does according to his inclination, with judg-  
 “ ment and understanding, and with the full con-  
 “ sent of his will, it is impossible but he must do  
 “ freely, although in another sense he does it ne-  
 “ cessarily.

“ necessarily. This holds, from whatever quarter we  
 “ suppose the necessity laid upon him to arise; whe-  
 “ ther it be, from the existence of the thing itself,  
 “ or from the motive effectually determining his  
 “ will, or from the decree and concurrence of the  
 “ first cause.”

I shall only quote further, a few passages from a  
 late treatise of the Reverend Mr Jonathan Edwards,  
 minister of Stockbridge, in New England, intitled,  
*A careful and strict inquiry into the modern pre-  
 vailing notions of the freedom of will, &c.* He  
 maintains, *p.* 24. “ That the will is in every case  
 “ necessarily determined by the strongest motives;  
 “ and that this *moral necessity* may be as absolute as  
 “ *natural necessity*; that is, that a moral effect  
 “ may be as perfectly connected with its moral  
 “ cause, as a naturally necessary effect is with its na-  
 “ tural cause.” “ For,” says he, *p.* 22. “ the dif-  
 “ ference between these two, does not lie so much  
 “ in the nature of the connection, as in the two  
 “ terms connected.”

Besides what I have already mentioned, there are  
 several other points in which Mr Gib and I differ;  
 such as, 1<sup>st</sup>, According to his notion, the guilt of  
 the action rests ultimately upon the action itself, and  
 not upon the disposition whence it arises. This  
 is plain from *p.* 68. where he reckons it an error to  
 say, “ That praise and blame rest ultimately upon  
 “ the disposition or frame of mind,” &c. Where-  
 as our Saviour tells us, that out of the *heart* pro-  
 ceed evil thoughts and actions; Matth. xv. 19.  
 The corruption of the stream rests ultimately upon  
 the corruption of its source: both are corrupt; but  
 the source is the ultimate object of blame. We  
 blame the tree for the corruption of the fruit. 2<sup>dly</sup>,  
 Mr Gib thinks that God is “ subjected to no im-  
 “ mutable laws of nature,” *p.* 72.; and that his  
 will is not subject to the laws which he has esta-  
 blished, *p.* 77.: Whereas I maintain, that, as the  
 F laws



laws of nature are established by God, and are decreed by him to continue in force to the time of the dissolution of all things, he is necessarily subjected to these laws; so that he cannot alter them, although he may suspend their influence for a little. The laws of nature, or the laws by which this world is governed, are founded upon the principles of equity, justice, and truth; which are eternal and unalterable. To say, then, that God is not subject to these laws, is to say, that God can alter his counsels, and rule the world in unrighteousness. I affirm, then, that the will of God is *necessarily*, and yet *freely* and *willingly*, subjected to the laws of nature, or the laws by which the moral and material world is governed; or, he must *necessarily* be God.

Would time allow me, I might proceed still farther to pursue Mr Gib through his *artifices*, *mysticisms*, *contradictions*, and *nonsense*; but as the task is disagreeable, and I am afraid lest I should fatigue the attention of my reader, I shall finish what I have to say upon his dissertation on the essay, with a few further observations.

He talks (*p.* 76.) about that letter which Mr Edwards wrote, in order to prove, that the Essayist's scheme differs from his. But he has not the honesty to tell us, that Mr Edwards read only the first edition of the essay. There is not one thing that Mr Edwards quarrels in the first edition, that remains in the second, save two \*, wherein he plainly mistook the author's meaning.

He asserts, again, (*p.* 148.), that all the necessity and liberty Calvin speaks of, is "obvious to every herd or ploughman that has the fear of God in his heart." But I could venture my life upon it, that there are millions of herds and ploughmen who understand nothing about Calvin's scheme. Ask any of them if they are necessary agents, or are under an absolute moral necessity, in all their ac-

\* I mean, the first and the last observation which Mr Edwards makes on the Essay.

tions, and they will deny it.— It is strange, too; yea, nonsense, to alledge, that the fear of God is essential to the knowledge of this doctrine. Bad men may understand it as well as good men.

He pays a great many compliments to Mr Boyle, (p. 26.), yet it is plain, from his conduct towards me, that he would have excommunicated him had he been alive, and a member of his society. But this is the ordinary practice of Mr Gib and his brethren: They murder the prophets, and garnish their sepulchres, as their ancestors, the Pharisees, did before them\*.

At last, Mr Gib comes to the six particulars, in

\* A very remarkable instance of this we have in a *presbytery-sermon*, preached by the Reverend Mr John Muckarsie, intitled, *The safety of divine truth, &c.* There he warmly recommends the sermons of the Reverend Mess. *Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine*, to the perusal of the students, as if these sermons contained truth without any mixture of error. He also calls themselves “*worthy Erskines* :” — yet these very ministers were delivered over to Satan, when alive, by him and his brethren.— However, I join in recommending their sermons, especially to Mr Muckarsie’s students. They may chiefly read one of Ralph Erskine’s sermons, preached from John ii. 19. — *Destroy this temple, &c.* There they will find truth *pleasantly handled*, and the errors of Mr Gib’s syrod *convincingly refuted*. They may also peruse another of his sermons, preached from Song ii. 8. where they will find the following truth: — “Some are, and have been for some time bygone, strangely occupied in raising up mountains of ungodly and ungrounded censures, and pretended excommunications; mountains of open and shameless prohibitions, discharging people to hear and join with those from whom they have so sinfully disjoined themselves; mountains of public stratagems, profanely pretended to be in the great name of God, whose authority is thus abused and trampled upon; and some poor blindfolded people, frightened with these terrible temptations of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, and a zealot for reformation; some frightened, I say, by these means, from their wonted food, and former fellowship with ministers and people, with whom they took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company,” &c. — According to Mr Muckarsie’s own confession, this is a great truth; — a truth I wish he and his brethren may seriously lay to heart, lest, if they go on to act in contradiction to their own judgment, and the word of truth, those bolts they have so arrogantly snatched from the hand of Omnipotence shall be hurled against themselves, in that tremendous day when Omnipotence shall be in arms.

which I have summed up the principles of the essay. But before he begins to consider them particularly, he rages a while at me, because I presume to impeach the synod's procedure in my case. Here he gives another falsehood: — He alledges, that I have bestowed all my "labour upon a virulent declamation against them, respecting their method of procedure;" and have kept all the matter, or ground of the sentence, a dead secret to my readers. But any of my readers will find the whole matter or ground of the sentence, in the 6th, 7th, and 8th pages of my *Vindication*; where I largely consider the matter of their procedure, before I take the least notice of the manner of it. — However, I shall now give a shorter summary of it. — "I could not see the essay with Mr Gib's eyes." Now, any one may form a proper judgment of my case, although he had never read the essay; as my inability to see it with Mr Gib's eyes, is what he calls "the great matter in controversy betwixt the synod" and me.

The Expositor owns, that these six principles are in the essay; but, if we will believe him, the Essayist affirms, that we have only a delusive sense of them. It is very odd that Mr Gib builds so much of his reasonings upon supposition that the Essayist calls our sense of liberty a *delusive sense*, while he has not produced one sentence in all the essay, where the author, either implicitly or explicitly, maintains any such thing; — as if Mr Gib's *ipse dixit* was a sufficient proof of any thing. It is then "really a shameful affair, to have this particular palmed up on us, as containing the substance of the essay. Any who rightly understand the case, will need a good deal of patience for keeping temper at such a story."

In this part of his book, he tells us how he came to find the errors of that essay. It seems he had rummaged through the whole of it, and made all possible



“ possible shiftings, traversings, and roamings,” in order to find out these ugly forms. At last, happy for him, he happened on the door of some secret closet or concealment in it, when his eye, ever clear to the blunders of others, beheld the doctrine of the essay making “ a cowardly peeping through “ one small key-hole in the shut door.” Whether he took time to seek the key to open it, or if he forcibly broke up the door, I cannot tell. However, in he jumps, and exposes the whole assemblage of ugly appearances within doors to public view. But, I believe, all proper judges of the essay, will be apt to think, that this exploit has been a sleeping reverie; that these ugly appearances are the productions of midnight-slumbers; and that, when Mr Gib awakes, he will say, Lo! it was a dream!

The Expositor tells me, that I am not able to condescend upon one principle in the first edition, which is not also expressed or implied in the second. But I am able to condescend upon two:— *We have a delusive sense of liberty of indifference: — Virtue is founded in some measure on this sense.* The reverse of both these is taught in the second.

He expresses great indignation at me, because I will not pass high encomiums upon his *candour, understanding, and Christianity*, p. 75. But it would be vain for me to commend a man who excels so much in applauding himself. Besides, what he says in other parts of his book, the whole page quoted is spent in passing very high compliments on his own genius. However, to do him justice, he gives us one great truth, when he says, “ I am “ pretty confident that I have kept to the point, “ according to the natural course of human understanding.” The only point he aims at, is to make the Essayist speak *heresy*, whether his words will bear that meaning or not. This point he has truly kept to.

One would imagine, after Mr Gib had spent  
eighty

eighty pages in lashing the *Essay* & me, he would at last leave us to cherish the small remains of life the best way we can: but it seems what Horace says of the poet, may be applied to the Expositor with the alteration of one word:

*Quem vero arripuit, tenet, occiditque scribendo,  
Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris, hirudo.*

De Art. Poet. lin. 475. &c.

“Whoever he can seize upon, he is sure to hold him, and write him to death; like a leech, which once fastened, sticks close to the skin till ready to burst with blood.”

However, had he satisfied himself with the blood of men only, I should not have deigned to make any reply to what he has advanced, or made any attempt to pull him off my skin, till he should be *plenus cruoris*,—full of my blood.—But as in the succeeding part of his elaborate *exposition*, which treats of the *moral sense* and *intuition*, he has advanced the very grossest errors, or made the most daring *attacks* on truth, I cannot pass it without the following reflections.

Before I begin, I may observe, that he introduces himself with a falsehood.—He maintains, That he opened not his mouth upon these subjects in the synod; but that I have brought them forth from a conversation he had with me in his own room. This is all over a lie. He spoke of them in the synod; nor do I remember that he opened his mouth about these points in that conversation. I might, indeed, have made great use of that conversation; but I disdain to act the part of the *Scottish inquisitors*, who make a private conversation matter of public *accusation*.

It is to be observed too, that as these points are not discussed in that essay which is the subject of dispute between me and the synod, I shall only consider what Mr Gib has advanced about these articles, without

without pretending either to vindicate or condemn what the *Essayist* has said.

As to the first point,—*There is a moral sense*,—Mr Gib denies that there is any such sense, in the sense in which it is taken in the *Essays*. Now, in the *Essays* it is defined,—*A power or faculty of simple perception*,—by which we perceive this difference among actions, that some are *fit, right, and meet*, to be done, while others are *unfit, unmeet, and wrong*, to be done: or, it is a *natural sense or perception* of good and evil, and so is the judge of our morals. If this be not a definition of conscience, I know not what it is. Divines and philosophers agree, that conscience is, the faculty or act of judging of the nature of our actions, whether they be good or evil, right or wrong. Therefore, since Mr Gib denies that there is such a faculty, p. 83. I must still say, that although he owns there is such a term as *conscience*, yet he denies there is such a thing.

The Expositor tells us, that this *moral sense* is not the standard of moral action in a state of *nature*, or to the Heathen; but maintains, that the law of God is the only rule by which we can determine the morality or immorality of human actions. By the law of God, as it is opposed to the *moral sense*, he can only mean his *revealed law*, or *revelation*; and consequently, according to Mr Gib's notion, the only standard of morality is the Bible; and so such as are without revelation are without any law. This is directly contrary to the apostle Paul's mind, Rom. ii. 14. 15. "The Gentiles," says he, "which have not the (revealed or written) law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: who shew by their actions the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness about right and wrong in these actions," &c. It is the business of the law to determine *right* and *wrong*, or what



what is *fit*, *right*, and *meet* to be done, and what is *unfit*, *unmeet*, and *wrong* to be done. The law which the Heathens have is in their heart. Now what principle of the heart is it that acts the part of a law? Surely that power or faculty which judges about the nature of our actions, or perceives what is right and wrong, and excuses us for the one, and accuses us for the other;—but this is what some call the *moral sense*, and others *conscience*. Therefore, after all that Mr Gib has said, since we must believe God rather than man, the *conscience* is that faculty by which we become a law to ourselves in a state of nature, or without revelation.—Thus the law of God is the standard of moral action.—The law of God in the heart or the conscience, is the rule to Heathens, or is the law of nature.—God's law revealed, or the Bible, is the rule to Christians as such, by which their conscience can judge more certainly about the morality of their actions.

These two laws are the same in substance. The written law is a transcript of the law in the heart, although it is more *full*, *accurate*, and *explicit*;—better enforced by motives, and so lays us under stronger obligations to obedience. It is strange, then, how the Expositor can call this law, founded upon a principle in the heart, “an imaginary law,” p. 31. and a law which Christians have nothing to do with! as if Christians had not to do with their conscience, as well as Heathens! Conscience is the judge of actions both to Heathens and Christians. The Bible is only a rule, and not a judge.

In p. 83. and 84. he makes a very wicked *insinuation*. He there seems to maintain, That offices of *undeserved kindness*, *requital of good for evil*, *benevolent and generous actions*, are as much enforced by the law of nature, as by revelation: for he reckons it an error to say, That these offices, &c. by the moral sense or the law of nature, are not made strictly

strictly our duty. Whereas all orthodox divines own, that these received their obligation or peculiar inforcement from revelation, or our Lord's injunctions, and not at all from a natural conscience, or the laws of nature.

In fine, he calls the following proposition erroneous,—God infused the principle of *sympathy* into the human breast; or, he looks on it as very wicked to say to God,—Thou infusest the generous principle, which makes him (man) feel for sorrows not his own, &c. Sympathy is the principle by which we feel for another's sorrow, whether real or imaginary. If any person give me a narration of a series of miseries and calamities, which he alledges he has undergone,—although all is a fiction, yet I *sympathise* or feel for him no less than if his misery had been real; and the same principle is affected in both cases.—Many allow, that to seek to have this principle affected by *tragical representations*, is to make a bad use of it: but to deny that God has infused such a principle into our minds, because we may pervert it, or apply it to bad purposes,—is just as if Mr Gib had said, God never infused the passions into the human mind, since they are capable of being perverted \*!!!

In opposition to Mr Gib, then, I maintain,—

\* That this is the real opinion of Mr Gib's synod, is very evident from the following story. At a late meeting of synod, a young gentleman of true learning and piety was arraigned at the bar for the atrocious crime of sending an essay to be inserted in the *Royal Magazine*. When the essay was read, among other very learned remarks made upon it, this is one, viz. "Here is an error in the very beginning of it, Moderator, *Of all the passions implanted in the human breast*.—He surely means, Moderator, that they were implanted by God, Moderator; but, Moderator, did ever God implant the passions in the human breast, Moderator? The passions are sinful, Moderator, and God cannot be the author of sin." This speech made such an impression upon the house, that the young gentleman was immediately laid under the sentence of excommunication.

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That mankind have a natural sense of right and wrong, called *conscience*, or the *moral sense*.— This is a law to Heathens, as it is God's vice-law-giver within us.— By this sense, in a state of nature, *benevolent actions* are not so strictly our duty, or so strongly enforced, as by revelation ;—and that the principle of sympathy, by which we feel for foreign sorrows, whether real or imaginary, was infused by God.

The second point he charges with error, is,— We cannot prove from reason that the world is not eternal. This he alledges I have maintained to be a truth. But Mr Gib is mistaken.— I have neither called it truth nor error. I have only said, That if it be known by intuition, that the world is not eternal, we have a more full conviction of its temporary nature than reason can afford ; but I have not asserted that it is so known.— As to his stupid assertion, That I have made faith and intuition the same thing, every attentive reader will perceive it to be false. I only alledge, that if this proposition,—We cannot prove from reason that the world is not eternal, be false, then the apostle Paul is in an error also, since he asserts that this is known by faith.

Here the Expositor has given us a truly new explication of the 11th of the Hebrews. His reasoning proceeds upon this supposition, That every object of faith is also an object of reason ; and that all those mighty exploits ascribed to faith in that chapter could have been done by reason alone. This must necessarily be the foundation of his argument, because he cannot conclude that this piece of knowledge is obtained both by faith and reason, unless he allow that every other event spoke of in that chapter be also an object of both ; since the apostle makes the creation as much an object of faith, as any other particular event he mentions in that place.

Mr



Mr Gib tells me, That its being a made thing, or a thing made of nothing, is not an object of faith, but of reason only; and the time, manner, and circumstances of making it, are objects of faith. But he has surely read the contrary.—*By faith we know that the things which are made, were not made of things which do appear*; or, we know that the world was made of nothing. But “a wresting of the apostle’s words is an ancient affair.”

However, Mr Gib must have reason exalted.—And how? By overthrowing her only foundation,—*intuition, or perception*. Against this he uses all the force and all the art he is master of. Here he strains every nerve, and exerts every effort. But, alas! how short-sighted we mortals are! Frequently when we press a point too keenly, our zeal carries us to extravagance, and insensibly overthrows the cause we are so eager to support.

He tells us, that *reason* “is the power by which man deduces one proposition from another, or proceeds from premises to consequences,” *p.* 86. From which it is plain, that reason can do nothing without premises, or propositions taken for granted. I ask Mr Gib, How these propositions come to be known by us as truths? By reason? Not at all; for reason proceeds in her deductions upon the supposition of their truth. It must, therefore, be some other principle by which we perceive the truth of these propositions. This is generally called *intuition*; and is defined to this purpose: “An act of the mind, whereby it has an immediate knowledge of any thing without any deductions of reason.”

It would be a vain attempt to prove, that there is such a faculty; since the whole human race experience it, save Mr Gib, who it seems has received a constitution very different from the rest of mankind. All writers upon our reasoning powers allow, that there are *immediate* as well as *mediate truths*.—The former are so called, because they are known

*primo intuitu*, by intuition, without the deductions of reason. The latter are called *mediate*, because they are deduced by reason from these intuitive truths. Intuition, then, is the foundation of all our knowledge.

It is certainly very ridiculous, then, that Mr Gib should say, (*p.* 86.), That "nobody can tell what it is," since so many have given us a definition of it. It is no less odd, that he should say so much about a thing which he owns he does not understand: "As to what sort of a thing it is," says he, "I profess I cannot understand." Ignorance, then, by his own confession, is the source of all his malevolence against it.

As the ignorant have need to be taught, I shall refer Mr Gib to the system of logic he learned at Edinburgh, that taught at Abernethy, and to that given us in the *Preceptor*, where he will find a very clear account of *intuition*. Especially I would recommend to his most diligent perusal, the truly learned Dr Reid's *Inquiry into the human mind, on the principles of common sense*. There he will find how little share reason has in forming mens opinions, and that *perception* or *intuition* is the principle of all knowledge. There he may learn, that "all reasoning is from principles. Mathematical demonstrations are founded upon mathematical axioms, and all our reasonings about existences are founded upon our perceptions or intuition." I cannot refer him to a book which will more effectually convince him of the absurdity of his reasonings upon this head.

But what the Expositor principally aims at is, to prove, That all our natural knowledge of the Deity is derived from reason, and not at all from intuition. I have already shown, that without intuition there can be no reasoning about any thing; and consequently our knowledge of the Deity is primarily the gift of intuition, and not of reason. I add  
too,

too, that this opinion is directly opposite to the Calvinistic doctrine, as I might prove by a great many quotations from Calvin himself. The 3d and 4th chapters of the first book of his Institutions, is full of sentiments to this purpose: "That our knowledge of the Deity is not drawn from the schools, or from reasonings; but that there is engraven in the hearts of all men a natural sense or feeling of God, which they have by an instinct common to all."

Agreeably to this Anti-calvinistic notion, That all our natural knowledge of God is derived from reasoning, he denies that the generality of mankind have the least notion of a God. He tells us, That every *thoughtful and considerate person* must have some apprehensions of a supreme being; *i. e.* men of thought and reflection, or such as can comprehend the reasonings of the learned, have some knowledge of God; but all the common people must be entirely ignorant of this truth. And, indeed, if all our knowledge of God be derived from reasoning, they cannot know any thing about a God, as few of them are capable of feeling the force of an abstract argument, or of following the chain of a demonstration. So far then Mr Gib is consistent with himself.—But how far this sentiment will agree with the above quotation from Calvin, I refer to any man of common understanding.

The Expositor alledges, That this intuition excludes all reasonings about the "being and attributes of God, and the creation of the world by him," *p.* 98. But this is a mere quibble, or a most ridiculous conceit. Without intuition we could have no reasonings: how then can intuition exclude reasonings?—The Essayist is wilfully mistaken by Mr Gib, since he allows reason all the place which any reasonable being can bestow upon it in this argument. Take his own words: "The comparing of things together, and directing our in-  
ferences"



“ferences from sense and experience, are its” (reason’s) “proper province. In this way reason gives  
 “its aid in our inquiries concerning the Deity. It  
 “enlarges our views of final causes, and of the pre-  
 “valence of wisdom and goodness,” *p.* 267. Again, (*p.* 305.), speaking of the Deity, “Reason,  
 “when applied to, gives us all its aid, both to  
 “confirm the certainty of his being, and to disco-  
 “ver his perfections. From effects so great and so  
 “good as those we see through the universe, we  
 “necessarily infer the cause to be both great and  
 “good.”

I shall only add here, that Mr Gib must necessarily deny the intuition, or immediate perception or vision of saints in heaven. He denies that there is such a thing as intuition on earth, or that any new faculty can be added to, or spring up in the minds of the glorified saints in heaven, (*p.* 117.); and consequently there is no immediate vision of any thing either here or hereafter !

In opposition, then, to the Expositor’s detestable notions, I maintain, That there is such a power in human nature as intuition :— That this is the foundation of all our reasonings about God, his existence, and attributes :— That we know God by intuition, by reason, and by faith ;— and, That all mankind have a natural sense or feeling of a Deity, however languid, and although in innumerable instances it is scarce perceptible.—And so much for Mr Gib’s reason.

It might now be expected that I should proceed to examine his dissertation on my *Essay on Excommunication* ;—but as such weakness, ignorance, virulence, and stupidity, (to say no more), discover themselves therein, I reckon it altogether below the dignity of human nature to take almost any notice of it \*. Besides,

\* I shall only beg my readers patience until I add, — That the Expositor has not given any distinct answer to either of the arguments of the

sides, as I reckon, that neither Mr Gib's opinion, nor mine, is in the least degree erroneous, or affect-

the essay. He has not shown any communion of Christians which the lesser excommunication does not exclude a person from: consequently the argument taken from the identity of the effects is still in force. He is greatly incensed against the general rule for explaining the terms *flesh* and *spirit*, yet he has not produced one text of scripture, where these two are opposed, to which this rule may not be applied. Nor is the argument from the phrase, *my spirit*, overthrown. He, indeed, charges it with degrading the *Holy Spirit* "into the private denomination of a particular man's spirit, of *Paul's spirit*." But why may not the Holy Spirit be called, in a certain respect, *Paul's Spirit*, since Christ is called *Paul's Lord*, &c.? According to this ridiculous argument, no man can call Christ, his *Redeemer*, *Lord*, *God*, &c.; because this is to degrade him into a private denomination. What he has advanced against the argument taken from the effects of being delivered to Satan, evidently militates against his own scheme; and, save his argumentative sneer, which has a vast influence upon weak minds, I know nothing he has said that can affect my explication. — He has not taken the least notice of the argument from the Jewish explication of the phrase, — *Deliver to Satan*, although it must be of very considerable weight.

He asks five questions, which, (if we will believe him), are unanswerable, upon my interpretation of that text. I shall answer them in a few words. As to the *first*: "Why did he reprove the Corinthians for not working a miracle sooner, since it was not in their power?" I answer, He only reprov'd them for their delay in not proceeding to exclude the man from communion with them. As to the *second*: "How comes the apostle to seek the assistance of the Corinthians for working a miracle?" I answer, He never sought their assistance; he only desires them to intimate to the offender the sentence of the apostle, that so he might know the cause of these bodily maladies. Nor was the Spirit the apostle's deputy, as the Spirit moved the apostle to speak certain words, upon the pronouncing of which, he assured him such an effect would happen. Again, "How comes the apostle to call it, *this punishment which was inflicted of many*?" I reply, It was immediately inflicted, in the presence and by the consent of many. 4<sup>thly</sup>, He asks, "Why there is not the smallest notice taken of this infliction of bodily punishments, as the thing effected?" I answer, The words of the sentence convey its meaning; and it has seemed meet to the Holy Spirit, to give us no farther notice of it. As to the 5<sup>th</sup>, "What was to come of the man's body at last?" I answer, When the end was gained, the man was no longer of use. When the man was restored to the church, his body was restored to its former state.

ing any truth of Christianity,—I am the less concerned, whether his opinion or mine be espoused. If any think they are convinced by Mr Gib's arguments, let them retain their opinion; if they rather incline to entertain my sentiments, why not?

I am surprised, however, to hear Mr Gib call the sentiments of the essay,—*novelties about excommunication*. He surely knows, that these have been the sentiments of many of our most orthodox writers an hundred years ago; yea, perhaps ever since the commencement of Christianity such an opinion has been in the world. Mr Howe, Dr Doddridge, &c. have espoused it. And to add to the oddity of Mr Gib's assertion, he himself was, and perhaps is still an advocate for this opinion; as he maintained it before the Associate presbytery of Edinburgh at different meetings, some years ago. I may also add, that his synod seems to be of that opinion also, as they have not inflicted the higher sentence upon any since the year 1747, although they have used the lesser in a great variety of instances;—the objects of which, even in the synod's judgment, have more richly deserved the higher, than those on whom they inflicted it. Either then they must be deficient in their duty, or they are convinced of the absurdity of such a sentence.

Nor need any think, that my view of that passage of scripture is inconsistent with our standards. I maintain, that from that chapter we have a clear warrant for all the excommunication spoke of in the Confession of Faith, *viz.* a total exclusion from the church;—although I reckon, that a miracle was also wrought on the man's body. And although I have said that there is but one excommunication, yet I still adhere to all that the Confession advances upon the head of church-censure.—  
 “ Officers of the church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's  
 “ supper for a season, and by excommunication  
 “ from



“ from the church,” &c. *Confess. chap. 30. sec. 4.\**

As to what I have said about a congregation only having a power to excommunicate a person,— I own it to have been a loose hint, thrown out without due consideration, — owing entirely to my inattention to what Presbyterian writers have advanced upon this head, That the church of Corinth, which excommunicated the incestuous person, was the church-representative.

The Expositor concludes his book with a great many encomiums on his own candour and Christianity, and protestations of affection towards me, notwithstanding the great injury I have done him in telling the truth about him and his brethren. Was I as fond of self-compliments as Mr Gib, I could tell him, — that however much I detest his Arminian principles, and abhor the practice of his synod in pursuing such arbitrary measures as are quite inconsistent with humanity itself, — yet I am conscious of wishing both him and his brethren well, and am heartily sorry for the course they have been left to take. I earnestly wish, that bigotry, blind fury and pride, may perish from their breasts, and true Christian sentiments may occupy their place ! that ignorance may no more spread her gloom over the people, but the light of the glorious gospel in its original simplicity, may be diffused among them !

I shall here take occasion to do Mr Gib the parti-

\* If by the lesser excommunication be meant, — a suspension from sealing ordinances for a season, while we are in doubt, whether the person accused of any scandalous action be really guilty or not; then I can admit of two excommunications; — the one, improperly so called, as it is only a bare suspension from sealing ordinances, until the church shall be convinced either of the guilt or innocence of the person scandalized; — the other, a total exclusion from the church; which should always be inflicted when a church-member is found guilty of a crime, which, according to scripture-rules, subjects him to that censure. — The former is founded upon the rules of common prudence; the latter, upon our Lord's command: *If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.*

cular honour to tell the world, that although he shamefully misbehaved in the affair of my excommunication, yet ever since he has so testified his sense and shame for what he did, that he has scarcely mentioned it in the public ; while his brethren, especially the most ignorant and interested, have made the pulpit a theatre of war, from whence they have incessantly discharged the artillery of lies, calumny, scandal, and malice. Unheard-of methods have been tried to inflame the populace against me. A system of detestable principles have been formed, according to their usual method, and represented on all occasions as the system I espouse ; although I have declared, as I hereby do declare, my detestation of them all, or any other principle inconsistent with our standards.—To hide all under a religious pretence, facts have been appointed, and applied to the most pernicious purposes of strife and debate. Sabbaths have been employed in building machines, in winding them up, and setting them a-going ; or rather in destroying the Essayist's machine of the universe, and in disturbing the operation of its several springs and wheels. In order to enforce this practice, the presbytery of Perth has enacted a law, obliging ministers to derange the Essayist's machine before the people ; to gratify their curiosity, no doubt, with a view of the connections, dependencies, relations, and subordinations, of its several parts ; or to terrify them with the view of the amazing bulk of its wheels, the force of its springs, the intricacy of its movements, and the signatures of design which appear in the mechanism of the whole. And for their farther advancement in the knowledge of Christianity, they may, perhaps, see meet to tell the people next about its *quiddity*, *quoddity*, *quomodo*, *quamdiu*, *quare*, *simul et semel* ;—to which may be added a few thoughts about the *moral sense* and *supra-rational intuition*.—Prayers too have been used as the most effectual engine

gine for alarming the jealousy, rivetting the prejudices, and inflaming the resentment of the people. Divested of the power of fire and sword upon earth, they have implored the fire of heaven to consume me, and the sword of the Lord to awake against me. Dreadful imprecations of divine vengeance have been denounced against all who should venture to hear me. People are caressed and Christianized in proportion to their industry in circulating my infamy and reproach, yea, in breathing out threatenings to murder me.—My book has been represented as *Rabshakeh's* blasphemy against the God of heaven; people have been debarred from sealing ordinances, if they should read it; and force and fraud have combined to hinder its circulation among the people, lest they should begin to see with their own eyes. Every diabolical artifice has been tried, every resource has been exhausted, in order to find matter of accusation against me, after I have been excommunicated. My private character has been canvassed: and although they cast me out from their communion, and I renounced all connection with them; yet a presbytery, in whose power I never can be reckoned, without any order from the synod, have proceeded to examine witnesses about some words I am falsely alledged to have dropt in a private conversation, not only of late, but even some years ago. If this be not the inquisition, I know not what it is. And although their proof has failed, and the *allegations* are gross *falsehoods*; yet even before the examination of the witnesses, they were affirmed in the pulpit as truths, and that presbytery had all the impudence to summon me to appear before the synod to answer to these false charges \*.——Such are the arts, such the malice, and such

\* The charges they have laid against me are these.—I should have said, *That there is some kind of priority of the Father to the Son, in the Holy Trinity*:—*There is no evil in fornication, &c.*



such the folly of men, who pretend to share the sole honour of being the church of Christ upon earth, and who assume the dignified titles of the Lord's *Jedidiahs*, &c. while they represent all other sects of Christians as enemies to religion, or, in other words, reprobates.

If these instances of a party-spirit are considered, and the temper of mind of which they are the effects,—I believe the sensible part of mankind will think, that the greatest favour I can do Mr Gib and his party at present is,—to transcribe the following passages from Dr Foster's sermon on heresy, and warmly to recommend them to their most serious deliberation.

“ It is surprising to think, what a vast influence  
 “ the mere sound of words, artfully managed, has  
 “ upon the generality of mankind, both to con-  
 “ found their judgment, and inflame their passions.  
 “ This the dealers in controversy seem to be uni-  
 “ versally aware of; and therefore scarce ever fail  
 “ to have recourse to it, as the surest method of  
 “ engaging on their sides the popular prejudices,  
 “ and ruining the credit of their adversaries.

“ And, among Christians themselves, the word  
 “ *heresy*, particularly, for want of being rightly  
 “ understood, has been, in every age, an engine of  
 “ defamation and violence; by which, persons of  
 “ differing sentiments, or of strong passions, have

The former I am alledged to have advanced in my room, since the excommunication; the latter, in a conversation at Alloa some years ago. But both are arrant falsehoods, formed by my enemies to curry favour with the clergy, or, perhaps, for the pleasure of propagating slander. That the latter is a falsehood, I am able to prove from the declaration of a gentleman of true *candour* and *worth*, who was present at the conversation. Nor is the former less false and calumnious, as at that time I was talking about the danger of prying into that mystery, and representing my offence at the distinctions used by our orthodox divines, when treating of this subject,—which distinctions are very ready to lead us into Arianism.—I could never speak in favour of a tenet which I ever have detested.

“ vented

“ vented their rage and animosity one against ano-  
 “ ther. It has been charged *promiscuously* on truth  
 “ and error; and the best characters, both for sound  
 “ knowledge and integrity, have had the hard fate  
 “ to fall under the imputation of it; and, in con-  
 “ sequence, have been stigmatized as reprobates,  
 “ debarred the privileges of Christian communion,  
 “ and treated with the utmost contempt and bar-  
 “ barity. As this word has been managed by hot  
 “ and passionate tempers, by *ecclesiastical politi-*  
 “ *cians* and *bigotted enthusiasts*, it has been the  
 “ instrument of endless schisms and confusions.  
 “ For heresy has been made to signify every thing,  
 “ be it right or wrong, that contradicts the esta-  
 “ blished opinions of the times; and the outcry  
 “ against it has generally been loudest in the most  
 “ corrupt and degenerate state. Nay, private  
 “ Christians, in the course of their religious debates,  
 “ setting up their sense of scripture as the standard  
 “ and test of truth, have mutually hereticated and  
 “ denounced their anathemas against each other;  
 “ by which unjust method of proceeding, they  
 “ have not only discouraged an impartial study of  
 “ the scriptures, and a free inquiry into the doc-  
 “ trines of the gospel, but have divided, and, con-  
 “ sequently, weakened the interests of our holy  
 “ religion, and exposed it to the scorn and insults  
 “ of unbelievers.

“ The persons who come nearest the character  
 “ of the old heretics, are violent party-men, who  
 “ confine Christianity to their own faction, and ex-  
 “ communicate all that take the liberty to differ  
 “ from them, the *rigid imposers* of human schemes  
 “ of doctrine, and modes of worship, as essential  
 “ branches of religion, and laws binding *conscience*:  
 “ These, I say, are most like the heretics con-  
 “ demned in scripture, notwithstanding their inso-  
 “ lence and presumption. — A turbulent, fac-  
 “ tious, and persecuting spirit, is one of the surest  
 “ marks

“ marks of heresy. And when the substance of religion is placed in trifling speculations, which have no manner of connection with virtue and morality, in abstruse incomprehensible mysteries, or in outward show and ceremony, we may certainly conclude, that if this does not proceed from a very weak head, it must spring from a dishonest heart.”

Since Mr Gib has all along signalized himself by his party-spirit, and his violent attachment to the work of excommunication, and hereticating all who differ from him in sentiment, I would warmly recommend the above quotation to his serious perusal. With still more warmth, I would advise him to consider what our Saviour said to him, and to all possessed of the same spirit : — *Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

I shall conclude with an affectionate address to the Antiburgher Seceders.

**M**IGHT I be so happy as to gain your attention but a few minutes, I would recommend to you the following things.

1. Weigh impartially the constitution of your synod. Can the minority of a court, and protesters against any deed of it, be reasonably called the court? Is not twelve a lesser number than sixteen? Were there not only twelve ministers, who left the Associate synod, and erected a new constitution in Mr Gib's house, while they left sixteen behind, together with the moderator, clerk, and the minutes of the synod? Were not these twelve protesters? They cannot then be called the court, because a court cannot protest against itself.

2. Is



2. Is it not matter of lamentation, that you should make such a noise about the religious clause of the burghs-oath? What service hath it done to the cause of religion; or rather, what hurt has it not done, by creating strife and division, and by destroying that love and charity wherein Christians are called to continue? — Is it not very strange, that you should profess to be of a religion different from that of the church of Scotland, and for this reason condemn an oath binding men, not to the *settlement* of *presbytery*, but to the *true religion settled*, or the scheme contained, in the Confession of Faith, — while you at the same time profess to be Presbyterians, and to adhere to a covenant, which binds to that very religion sworn to in the burghs-oath?

3. Consider what manner of spirit you are of, while you represent your brethren as heretics, and erroneous persons, without condescending upon one truth they oppose, or one article in all the Christian system, which they do not adhere to as closely as yourselves. They indeed differ in their view of the meaning of the burghs-oath; but still you own, that in their meaning it is a lawful oath. Would it not therefore be far better, to suffer every one to retain his own sentiments about the meaning of that clause, and to live in unity as becomes Christians, only provoking one another to good works.

4. I would have you to consider the vanity of all your excommunications, and how inconsistent they are with Christianity. What good effects have they ever been productive of? Have they not rather tended to embitter your own minds, to inflame them with zeal and fury, and to render yourselves ridiculous in the eyes of all the thinking part of mankind? Seek unity then with your brethren, confess your faults to one another, and forgive mutually, as God for Christ's sake has forgiven sinners. — Seek the knowledge of Christ crucified, and meddle not with any thing which may tend to the hurt or schism of the body of Christ.

I would particularly advise the people, to be led blindly by no man, but examine the scriptures daily, to see if men speak agreeably to that test of truth. It is necessary that every one should be persuaded in his own mind. Religion does not consist in an obstinate attachment to men, or in a blind adherence to any truth. We must first know the truth, or be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us; and then we must adhere to the truth, and not to the dictates of men. If we believe the truth merely upon human authority,  
our

our faith is not divine ; nor can it have any due influence upon our religious practice. It is necessary, then, that we should lay our minds open to conviction, and be ready to receive the truth from whatever quarter she comes, although she should contradict our former sentiments. And our faith must be founded upon divine authority by the aid of the divine Spirit, as then only it can *work by love*, or become a principle of religious action.

These things I have offered to your consideration, because I have the deepest concern for your everlasting welfare, and am truly sorry to see so many valuable Christians among you blindly led by men, which greatly tends to hinder their advancement in Christianity. You may, perhaps, question the reality of my concern, because I have spoken warmly against your ministers conduct. But all that I have said is with a sincere regard to their good, and the good of the whole church. I wish they may be reclaimed from their error ; and that bigotry, ignorance, and ill-nature, may perish from the earth ;—which desire is the spring of all that I have said. In dealing with them I have used the means which our Lord employed, when he inveighed so severely against the spirit and practice of the Pharisees. He called them a *generation of vipers, hypocrite*, &c. ; yet still he entertained the warmest regard for their souls. I desire no ill to befall either soul or body of any of you ; but that you may be brought to entertain just sentiments of Christianity, and not be too punctual in *tithing mint and anise*, or in observing modes and rites, but careful to cultivate judgment, mercy, and the love of God.

F I N I S

